

***Lamiyya* by al-Shanfara and its Commentaries: Copies Available in the Holdings of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts and the Oriental Department Collection, Gorky Research Library**

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The article “*Lāmiyya* by al-Shanfarā and its commentaries: Copies available in the holdings of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts and the Oriental Department collection, Gorky Research Library” reviews the problem of studying and describing oriental manuscripts, which gains more relevance in recent times. This research presents life facts of the famous pre-Islamic poet al-Shanfarā and the features of his most famous work, *Lāmiyya*. The study focus on the copies of this work, as well as copies of its commentaries stored in the holdings of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts and the Oriental Department collection, Gorky Research Library, SPbSU. The poetry of al-Shanfarā is traditionally compared with classical *muallaq*, where the authors praise tribal patriotism against the main idea — a life in exile. *Lāmiyya* got its name for the special repetitive rhyme. Among European researchers, this *qaṣīda* is also known as “The Desert Song”. The authors analyze the features of various copies of al-Shanfarā’s work and discuss the most important aspects of various commentaries on his work. The article provides illustrations of some sheets of al-Shanfarā’s copies and copies of *Lāmiyya* commentaries. The writing by al-Shanfarā was subjected to extensive research by national, Western and Arab experts. Through analyzing the most well-known commentaries on *Lāmiyyat al-arab*, it is possible to evaluate exactly what features call the attention of scholars. In addition, copies of *Lāmiyya* commentaries stored in manuscript collections deserve an independent careful study and description.

Keywords: codicology, Arabic manuscript, copies, Arabic, pre-Islamic poetry.

The writings of pre-Islamic poets have always aroused persistent interest of researchers. The creative work of al-Shanfara attracted special attention of European experts, despite the fact that lacking information about the poet in Arab sources until the second half of the 8th century often raised the question of authenticity and his works were suspected to represent the later fakes. Their authorship was occasionally attributed to Khalaf al-Ahmar, the Iraqi medieval scholar and a connoisseur of ancient Arab poetry [1, p. 58]. However, their recent in-depth analysis made by I. Yu. Krachkovsky, who referred to Arab sources as well, indicated the presence of extensive specific vocabulary, uncharacteristic of a town man, and therefore confirmed the ancient Arabic origin of *qasidas*.

No reliable data on al-Shanfara’s biography is available; it is believed that he died in the first decade of the 7th century. The poet’s nickname *Shanfara* probably indicates the

exterior feature, i. e., thick lips. According to some sources, his real name was Sabit b. Aus and he belonged to the Azd tribe. Medieval Arabic tradition classifies al-Shanfara as “brigand poet”, calling such wanderers by a generic term *suluk/saʿalik*. Vagabond poets traditionally praised the Bedouin raids, which they took part in [2, p. 66].

Since almost nothing is known about the poet’s life, his name is associated with many legends. For instance, some Arab sources say that the father of al-Shanfara stole his mother from another tribe and was killed later by the Salaman tribe¹ that raised the orphaned future poet. It is believed that al-Shanfara was banished from his tribe and spent his life wandering and struggling with many hardships that tempered his character.

According to another version, al-Shanfara was a slave of the Salaman tribe and once fled, vowing to kill a hundred people from this tribe. Over the long years of his wanderings, he took revenge on ninety-nine enemies and was killed in a battle after that. But the legend says that after his own death al-Shanfara killed the hundredth enemy, who died by tripping over the murdered poet’s skull [1, p. 36, 54].

Taabbata Sharran, a vagabond poet and al-Shanfara’s comrade-in-arms mourned the death of his friend in verse [1, p. 53].

Particular attention to the pre-Islamic poets emerged in the Middle Ages. For instance, al-Shanfara is mentioned in “The Unique Necklace” by Ibn Abd Rabbihi, the chapter “The Emerald. The Book of Valor”, where the author quotes the pre-Islamic poet about death on the battlefield: “*Don’t bury me. Burying me is forbidden by custom. But be of good cheer, Umm ‘Amir. When my head is carried away, — oh hyena, Take the remains of the dust without fail*” [3, p. 249]. In The Book of Misers, al-Jahiz quotes al-Shanfara’s (without mentioning his name) lines in one of the stories: “*If my head is cut off, my best part, Other remains will have be left in the desert*”. [4, p. 118]. Zakariya al-Qazwini also distinguished al-Shanfara among other poets of the Jahiliyyah period [5, p. 55].

The interest in al-Shanfara’s creative work has only increased over time. Thus, Ahmad Faris Shidyaq published a number of monuments of classical Arabic literature, including al-Shanfara’s writings with numerous interpretations [6, p. 243].

Al-Shanfara, the “exiled poet”, took preference in describing the Bedouin raids. By tradition, his poetry is compared with classical *muallaq*, where the authors praise tribal patriotism against the main idea — a life in exile [1, p. 36; 7, p. 239]. His most famous qasida *Lamiyya* includes 68 beyts, consists of several poetic pictures, is written in the *tawil* meter and reflects the commitment to Bedouin customs traditional for the pre-Islamic works. This work by al-Shanfara is viewed among the best examples of pre-Islamic poetry, as it provides a colorful description of the poet’s lonely life in the steppe, Bedouin raids, the author’s discontent with the doings of his former fellow tribesmen, and praising the free nomadic life.

The most famous al-Shanfara’s writing, *Lamiyya* got its name for the special repetitive rhyme in the letter “lam”. At the same time, the usual three-part writing style is not followed. It is dedicated to one theme, self-praise of a Bedouin lonely hero [8, p. 139]. Among European researchers, this qasida is also known as “The Desert Song”. The work was translated into European languages more than once; Russian translations were made by I. Yu. Krachkovsky, A. A. Dolinina and A. M. Revich. Al-Tantawi showed interest in al-Shanfara’s poetic works, as mentioned by A. E. Krymsky [6, p. 173].

¹ In Arabic sources, the tribe is called Salaman, transcribed “Salman” into Russian.

Many Arab scholars addressed this work and commented on it; the most important are commentaries by medieval scholars, al-Zamakhshari and al-Ukbari.

The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts collection contains two *Lamiyya* copies (B 1496, sheets 28b–32a and C 780, sheets 76b–77a), as well as a copy of al-Ukbari's work (B 92, sheets 86a–98a), which represents a commentary-explanation on the al-Shanfara's qasida.



Fig. 1. Manuscript 1496, fragment (sht. 29b–30a)



Fig. 2. Manuscript 1496, fragment (sht. 30b–31a)

Manuscript B 1496 (sheets 28b–32a) represents a convolute of independent copies of eight different qasidas; one of these is *Lamiyya* by al-Shanfara. Manuscript size: 20.5*14 cm; the size of included copies (al-Shanfara and al-Ma'arri) is smaller, 18.5*13 cm. Manuscript binding: thin cardboard, glued paper inside. European filigree paper. Handwriting in all copies different, indicative of different calligraphers. Al-Shanfara's copy in *naskh* handwriting, carry-over words absent. Copy text fully diacritized. Main body in black ink, some commentaries in red ink. Commentaries placed in margins and between lines.

Manuscript sheets 1a, 9b, 27b, 28a, 33b bear owner's seal, inscription as follows:

هذا وقف الراجي
فيض الصمدي الشيخ أحمد صباح الدين بن مصطفى الخالدي... بعدما سمعه... علي الدين
1021

This is the property of Raja Fayd al-Samdi al-Sheikh Ahmad Sabah al-Din b. Mustafa al-Khalidi (unlegible) after he heard (unlegible) Ali al-Din 1201.

Copy title with grammatical error, masculine instead of feminine form:

قصيدة لامية للشنفرى وهو عظيم وله شروح كثير

Lamiyya qasida by al-Shanfara's qasida is great, there are (exist) a lot of commentaries on it.



Fig. 3. Manuscript 1496, fragment (sht. 28b–29a)

The text begins with the words:

هذه قصيدة عجيبة تعرف بلامية العرب للشنفرى رحمه الله تعالى وهو في اللغة عظيم الشفنين نقل ابن هشام في تلخيصه ان اسم الشنفرى ثابت بن جابر وانه احد خراب العرب اي لصوصهم والواحد خراب وقال

كان اهل الادب يقولون اولى ما تراضى به الابنا لامية العرب والسبع الطوال فانها تفتق اللسان بالفصاحة وتهذب الاخلاق وتزيد في الفضل
قال جابر الله الزمخشري في اول شرحه عليها قبيلته الازد وكان من العدائين وبه يضرب المثل فيقال
اعدى من الشنفرى وغيره من العدائين

This amazing verse named Lamiyyat al-Arab belongs to al-Shanfara, may God have mercy on him! Meaning of his name: thick-lipped. b. Hisham wrote in his work that al-Shanfara's name is Sabit b. Jabir and that he is one of the Arab wanderers. Literary scholars said: the first thing that the next (Arab) generations recognized unanimously was Lamiyyat al-Arab and seven muallaqs. They teach eloquence, educate and develop

Then follows a reference to al-Zamakhshari's commentary, who wrote that a proverb about al-Shanfara was created, noting the poet's capability to run fast:

أعدى من الشنفرى

Faster than al-Shanfara.



Fig. 4. Manuscript 1496, fragment (sht. 31b–32a)

The colophon text reads as follows:

تمت القصيدة البليغة على يد عبيد الله السنار مصطفى عماد حال كونه مامورا بخدمة خاصلر في ... ١٨٦²

This impressive qasida (copied) by Ubeid Allah al-Sattar Mustafa Imad was completed when he served in a (land allocation institution) in (unlegible) 186.

² It means 1186 year.

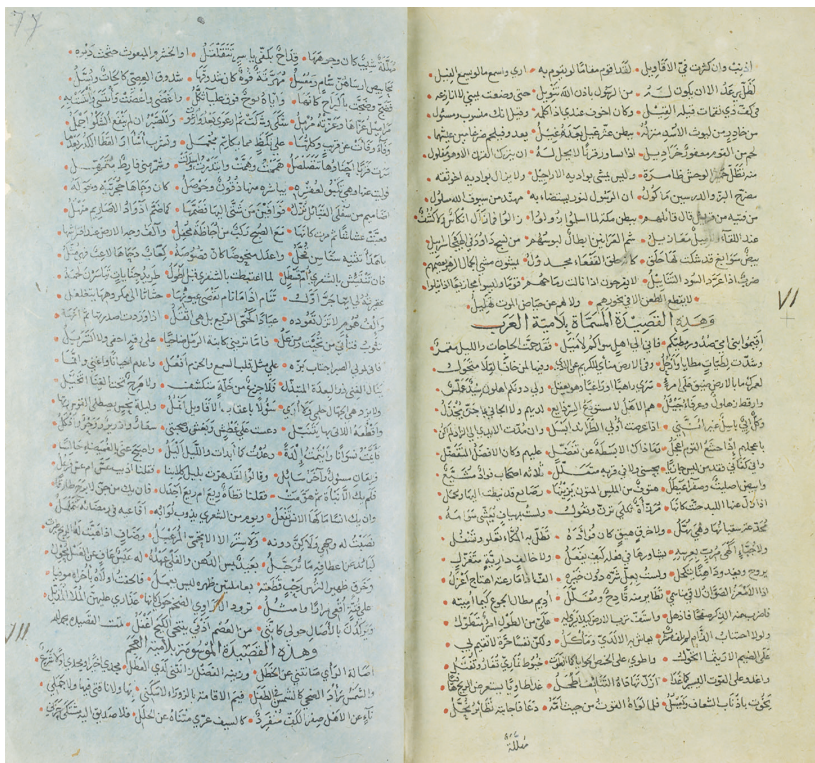


Fig. 5. Manuscript C 780, fragment

The second copy of al-Shanfara's writing is placed in manuscript C 780 (76b–77a), also a convolute. Manuscript size: 22*13 cm. Manuscript binding: leather and cardboard. European paper, good condition, different shades: white and blue. All copies made by one hand, in *naskh* handwriting. Al-Shanfara's copy text fully diacritized; main body in black ink, diacritics in red ink, carry-over words present in all sheets.

The first manuscript page bears owner's seal, inscription as follows:

تملكه العبد الحقير محمد بن عبد الفتاح جميل الخط

Belongs to the lamentable slave Muhammad b. Abd al-Fattah — possessor of a beautiful handwriting.

The copy begins with the words:

وهذه القصيدة المسماة بلامية العرب

And this is qasida entitled Lamiyyat al-Arab.

Concluding text on sheet 77a not included in traditional colophon:

تمت القصيدة بحمد الله

Qasida is ended, thank God!

آل بالشراء الشرعي بحمد الله تعالى وكرمه لنوبة العبد الفقير لرحمة مولاه الغني محمد امين
محمد بن رمضان رجب سنة 1021

Passed (this manuscript) by legal purchase thanks to God Almighty and his generosity into the hands of a poor slave through the kindness of his wealthy sayyid Muhammad Amin b. Ramadan b. Rajab in 1201.

The same sheet indicates:

هذا شرح لامية العرب للشيخ الفاضل الكامل أبي البقا العكبري المصري رحمه الله تعالى رحمة واسعة
امين وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى اله وصحبه وسلم

This commentary on (the writing) Lamiyyat al-Arab belongs to the honorable noble Sheikh Abu al-Baqa al-Ukbari al-Misri. May God Almighty be merciful to him with great mercy. Amen. And may God bless and greet our sayyid — Muhammad, his family and his companions.

And further:

والدرر الذي انتظم في شرح لامية العجم أيضا بعد 13 ورقة

And the pearls (works) that were written on the commentary of Lamiyyat al-Ajam also (will be given) 13 sheets after.

This refers to another copy, *Lamiyyat al-Ajam*, also included in the convolute.

Then:

قال أبو الهذيل العلاف لا يجوز في درر الكلام ولا في تركيب الطبيعة ولا حب في
القياس ولا في الحس ولا في الممكن ولا ال... أن يكون محب ليس لمحبيه اليه ميل

Abu Hazil al-Allaf said: It is impossible, neither in the pearls of speech, nor in the structure of nature, nor in love for size, feeling or opportunity or (unlegible) to escape the craving of a lover for a loved one.



Fig. 7. Manuscript 92, fragment

وهذا آخر القصيدة الموسومة بلامية العرب صلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى اله وصحبه وسلم
والحمد لله اولا واطرا وصحوة الثلاث ثامن عشر من رمضان والمعظم قدره شهر سنة 1082

This is the end of qasida called Lamiyyat al-Arab. And may God bless and greet our sayyid — Muhammad, his family and his companions. I thank God on the eighteenth day of Ramadan, in the great month, in 1082.

Three copies of *Lamiyyath* commentaries authored by al-Zamakhshari (780), al-Mubarrad (781) and al-Turki (739) are stored in the Oriental Department collection, Gorky Research Library, SPbSU.

Abu al-Qasim Mahmoud b. Umar b. Muhammad b. Umar al-Hoarizmi al-Zamakhshari was born in Zamakhshar in 1075 (469 Hijri) into a poor family. He attended primary school and also studied under the guidance of his father. Already in his early years, al-Zamakhshari wrote several philological works. Al-Zamakhshari visited Iraq, Syria, Khorasan, had a large number of students. The scholar died in Khorezm in 1144 (538 Hijri) after returning from Mecca [9, p. 197].

Al-Zamakhshari's commentary on the writing of al-Shanfara is considered the most complete work of this kind. The author carefully analyzes the grammatical and morphological features of the text, taking the famous verses, ayats from the Quran, as well as the most common proverbs as examples. It is noteworthy that al-Zamakhshari used in his interpretations not only the literary Arabic, but also its dialects. The scholar referred to the writings of Sibawayh, al-Ahfish, al-Mubarrad, and others. Moreover, al-Zamakhshari made a phonetic analysis of *Lamiyya's* text, among other things.

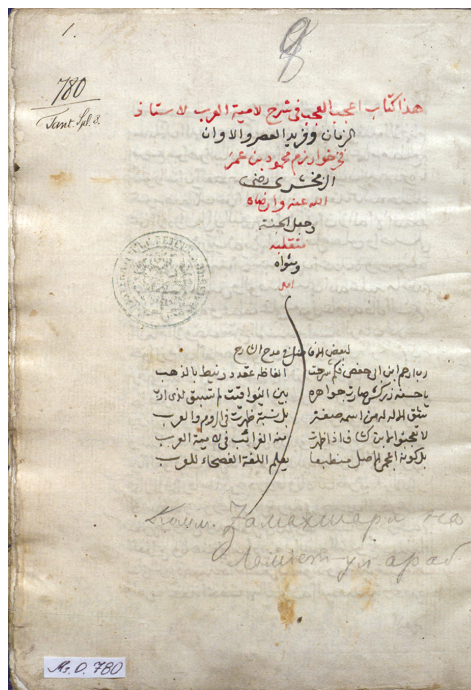


Fig. 8. Manuscript 780, fragment

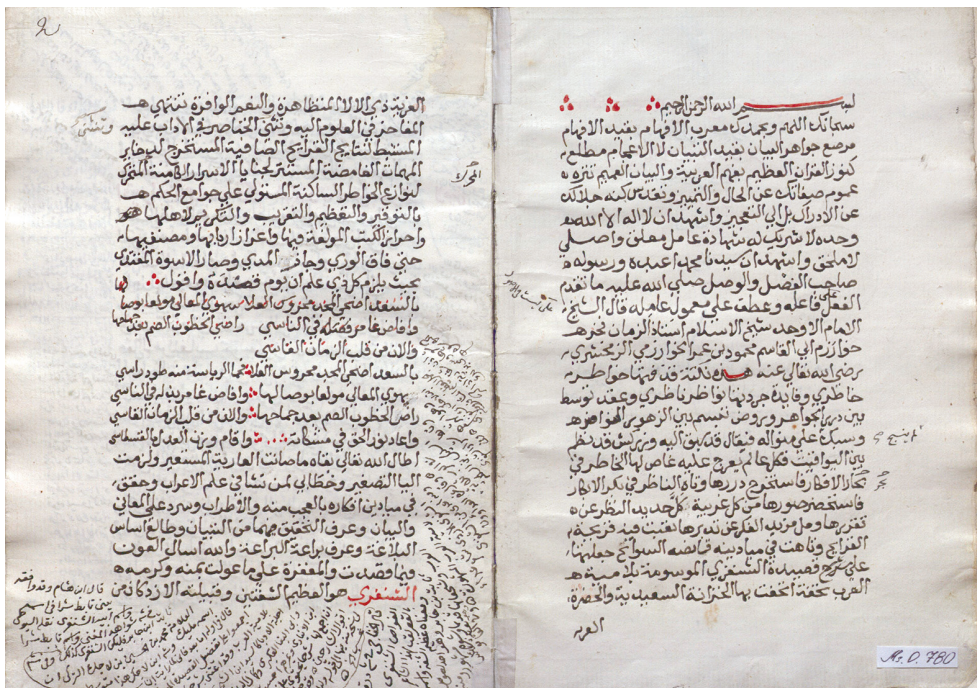


Fig. 9. Manuscript 780, fragment

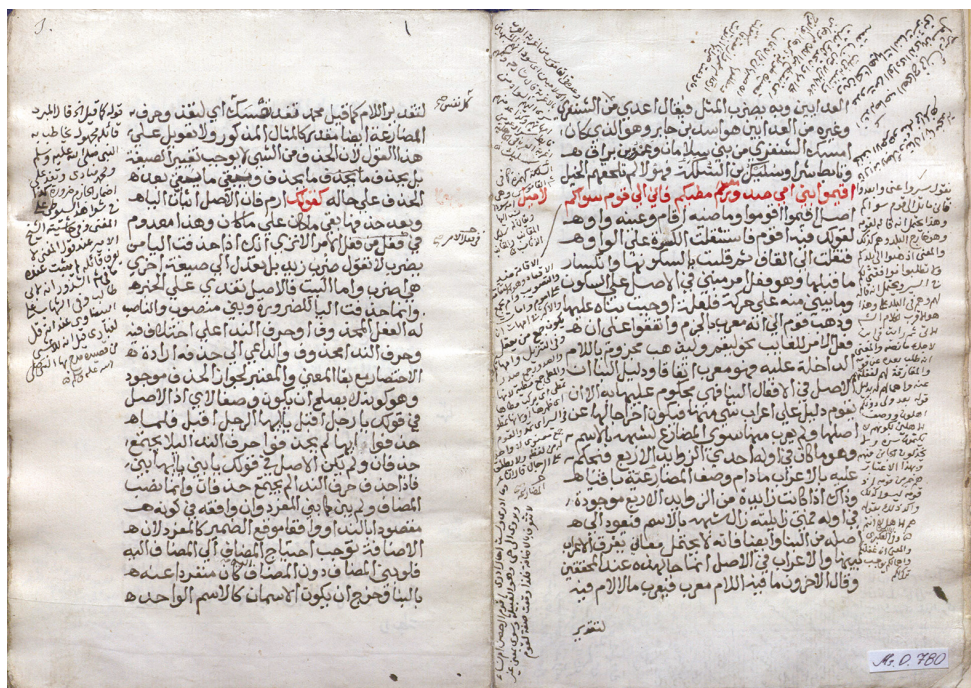


Fig. 10. Manuscript 780, fragment

The copy of al-Zamakhshari's works is included in Manuscript 780 (44 sht.). Copy title:

اعجب العجب في شرح لامية العرب للزمخشري

Most surprising in the interpretation of Lamiyyat al-Arab (authored) by al-Zamakhshari.

Manuscript size: 24.5*17.5 cm. Binding: fabric-covered cardboard. European paper with filigree. *Naskh* handwriting, carry-over words present. Main text in black ink; individual words, *Lamiyya* beyts and al-Shanfara's name highlighted in red ink. Margin commentaries.

Sheet 1, colophon:

هذا كتاب أعجب العجب في شرح لامية العرب لاستاذ الزمان وفريد العصر والاولان فخر خوارزم
محمود بن عمر الزمخشري رضي الله عنه وارضاه وجعل الجنة منقلبه ومثواه امين

This book is the most amazing (among) commentaries on Lamiyyat al-Arab. It belongs to the only master of his era, the pride of Khorezm, Mahmud b. Omar al-Zamakhshari. May God be pleased with him and grant him a place in Paradise. Amen.

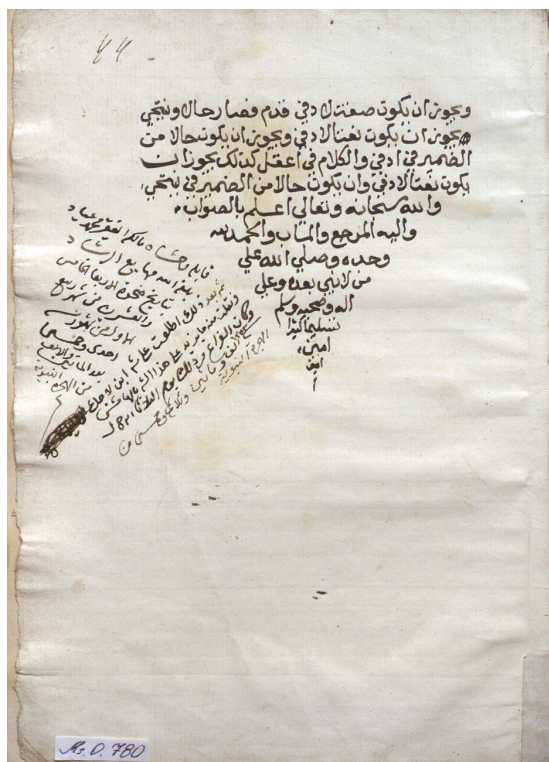


Fig. 11. Manuscript 780, last sheet (sht. 44)

Copying date(s) and calligrapher name not specified.

I. Yu. Krachkovsky notes that despite the fact that the main text was made by other person, commentaries' comparison and extraction were made by al-Tantawi, as evidenced by the respective notes [10, p. 106].

Al-Zamakhshari focuses on the grammar and syntax of al-Shanfara's writing, using diverse examples from the Quran.

Al-Mubarrad refers to the most prominent representatives of the Basri school of grammar; he is the author of the famous "al-Kamil" book dedicated to Arabic linguistics. Abu al-Abbas Muhammad b. Yazid b. Abd al-Akbar, or al-Mubarrad, was born in Basra in 826 (210 Hijri) and died in Baghdad in 898 (286 Hijri). He studied with the outstanding scholars of his time, first in Basra and later in Kufa. Most of his activities relate to commenting on Sibawayh's works. Al-Mubarrad was highly esteemed by his contemporaries who called him the most knowledgeable grammarian next to Sibawayh; al-Hamawi noted his excellent knowledge of grammar, eloquence and calligraphic handwriting. A long-lasting dispute between al-Mubarrad and Tallab, his opponent from Kufa, developed into a traditional rivalry between the Basri and Kufi schools of grammar.

Al-Mubarrad focused on the interpretation of words in al-Shanfara's beyts, completely avoiding grammatical and morphological problems. Moreover, the authorship of Lamiyyath commentary, attributed to al-Mubarrad, is questioned by the experts.

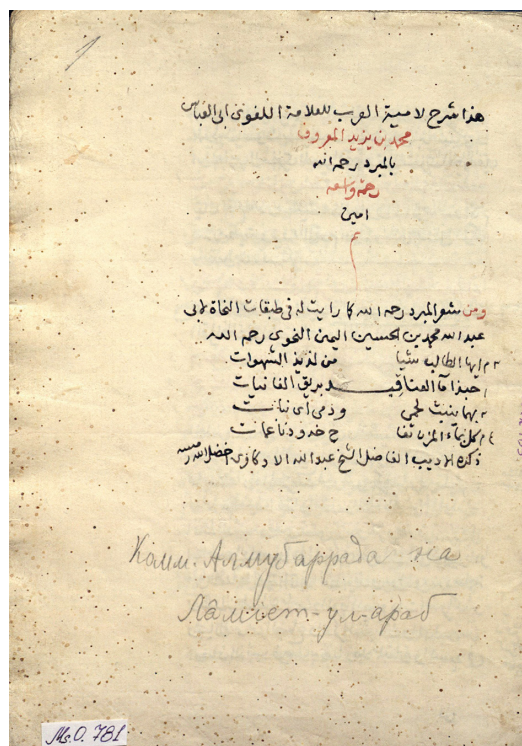


Fig. 12. Manuscript 781, fragment

Al-Mubarrad's copy is contained in Manuscript 781 (sht. 9). Manuscript in good condition, size: 24*17.5 cm. Binding: soft cardboard. European paper, with filigree. Text in black ink, *Lamiyya* beyts highlighted in red ink and numbered. Handwriting mixed, *naskh* (prevailing) and *rukaa* (*ruq'ah*). Carry-over words present. Margin commentaries in black and red ink.



Fig. 13. Manuscript 781, fragment

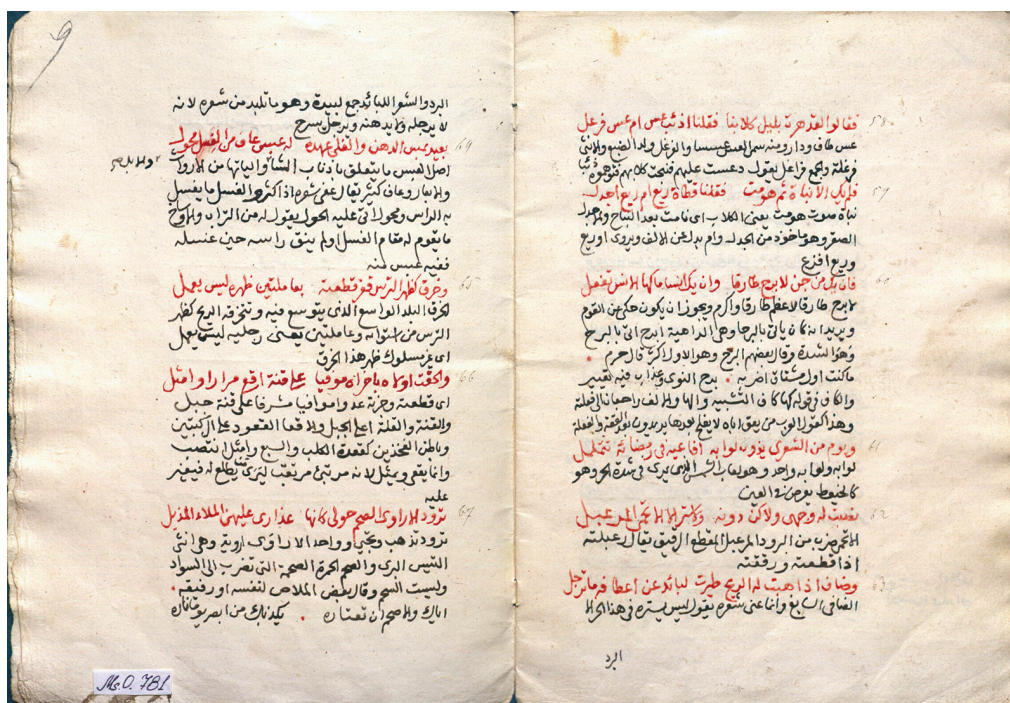


Fig. 14. Manuscript 781, fragment

Copy title indicated on sht. 1, colophon text as follows:

هذا شرح لامية العرب للعلامة اللغوي أبي العباس محمد بن يزيد المعروف بالمبرد رحمه الله رحمة
واسعة أمين

This is a commentary on the Lamiyyat al-Arab by scholar linguist Abu al-Abbas Muhammad b. Yazid, known as al-Mubarrad, may God be merciful to him with great mercy.

Then follows a few poetic beyts authored by al-Mubarrad.

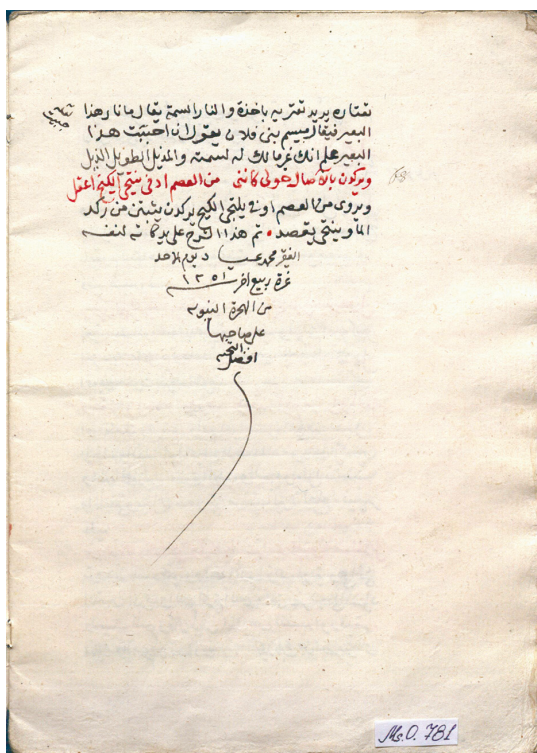


Fig. 15. Manuscript 781, last sheet

Last sheet colophon indicates calligrapher name and end date of copying:

تم هذا الشرح على يد كاتبه لنفسه الفقير محمد عياد يوم الأحد غرة ربيع آخر سنة 1251 من
الهجرة النبوية على صاحبها افضل التحية

This copy is completed (done) by the hand of the unfortunate Muhammad Ayad (al-Tantawi) on Sunday, at the end of 1251, Hijri.

I. Yu. Krachkovsky notes that “this copy served as the core source for publication of al-Shanfara’s poem in *The Arabic Reading Book* compiled by V.F. Girgas and V.R. Rosen” [10, p. 106].

The third manuscript copy (739, 28 sht.) containing *Lamiyya* commentary by Muhammad b. al-Hussein b. Lajik al-Turki³ is also stored in the SPbSU library collection.

³ No data on al-Turki were found.



Fig. 16. Manuscript 739, binding

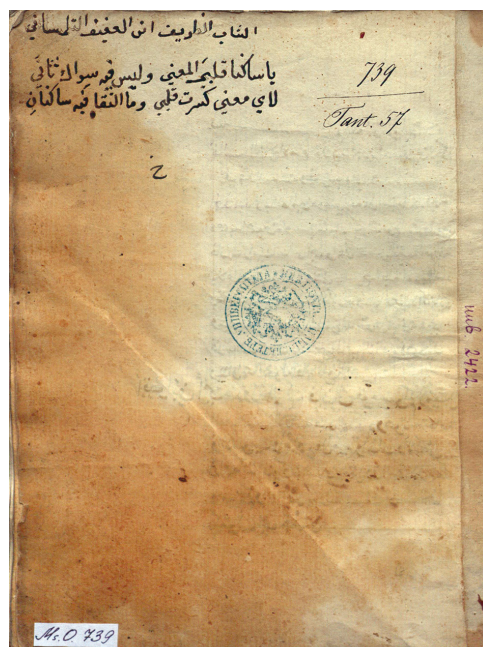


Fig. 17. Manuscript 739, fragment

The most notable features of Lamiyya commentary by al-Turki, is that maximum attention is paid to the interpretation of difficult words: *al-Gharib* (*Difficult words*) section provides descriptions of birds, animals, etc., whose names are found in al-Shanfara's writing; the meaning of each beyt is explained in *al-Ma'na* (*Meaning*) section. Unlike other commentators, al-Turki refers to scholars' works only rarely and gives almost no example

citations from famous poems. The author provides some grammar notes, antonyms, but only occasionally.

Manuscript size of: 22.5*16.5 cm. Thin leather binding. European filigree paper, flavescent. Main text in black ink, some words in red ink. *Naskh* handwriting, carry-over words present. Copy text diacritized. Main body in black ink, some commentaries in red ink. Commentaries placed in margins.

Sheet 1 shows two poetic beyts by Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Afif al-Din Suleiman b. Ali al-Tilimsani, a famous wit of that time⁴:

الشاب الظريف ابن العفيف التلمساني
يا ساكنا قلبي والمعنى وليس فيه سواك ثاني
لأي معنى كسرت قلبي وما النقا فيه ساكنان

Oh you living in my tired heart
There is no one but you in it (heart)
Why did you break my heart?
Two did not meet in it.



Fig. 18. Manuscript 739, fragment

Sheet 1b begins with the traditional basmala:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
قال الشيخ الامام العلامة محمد بن لاجك التركي عفا الله عنه وغفر له امين
الحمد لله رب العالمين . وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى اله وصحبه اجمعين. وسلم تسليما كثيرا الي
يوم الدين اما بعد فاني لما رايت الناس اجمعوا علي تفضيل القصيدة المعروفة بلام العرب وقد اعتنى بشرحها

⁴ Al-Tilimsani was a Cairo-born poet, lived and died in Damascus (1263–1289). His father was also a poet from Tilimsan city in Algeria.



Fig. 19. Manuscript 739, fragment (sht. 1–1b)

أجلة الأدبا كالسيد ابن الشجري وابي البقا العُكبري وكمال الدين ابن الأنباري وغيرهم أحببت ان اجمع لها شرحا يحتوي علي اقوال الشارحين قال الشنفرى الأزدي وهو مليك ويقال انها منحولة قالها خَلْفُ الاحمرُ

*In the name of God most gracious and most merciful,
Sheikh Imam said, scholarly man Muhammad b. al-Hussein b. Lajik al-Turki, may God forgive him and have mercy. Amen.*

Thank God, Lord of the worlds. And may God bless and greet our sayyid — Muhammad, his family and his companions. And may he stay blessed until Judgment Day.

After I saw that all people appreciated the famous Lam al-arab⁵ qasida and the greatest literary scholars, such as Ibn al-Shajari, Abu al-Baqa al-Ukbari, Kamal al-Din b. al-Anbari and others, commented on it, I wanted to collect a commentary that contains the words of interpreters. (Lamiyya) Created by al-Shanfara al-Azdi, he is its author. But they say that it (Lamiyya) is a fake and was created by Halaf al-Ahmar.

Sheet 28, colophon:

تمت
وقد تم ذلك الشرح بحمد الله وعونه وحسن توفيقه بالتمام والكمال

Ended.

This commentary is completed successfully thanks to God and His help.

Information on calligrapher name and copying date absent.

The writing by al-Shanfara was subjected to extensive research by national, Western and Arab experts. Through analyzing the most well-known commentaries on *Lamiyyat*

⁵ This refers to *Lamiyyat al-Arab*.

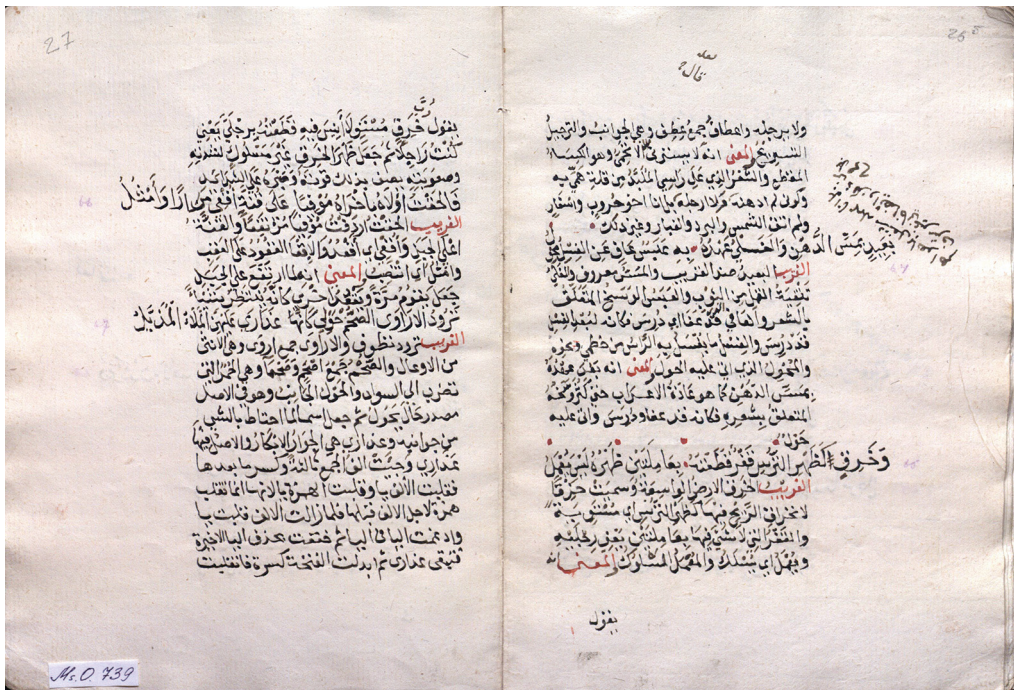


Fig. 20. Manuscript 739, fragment

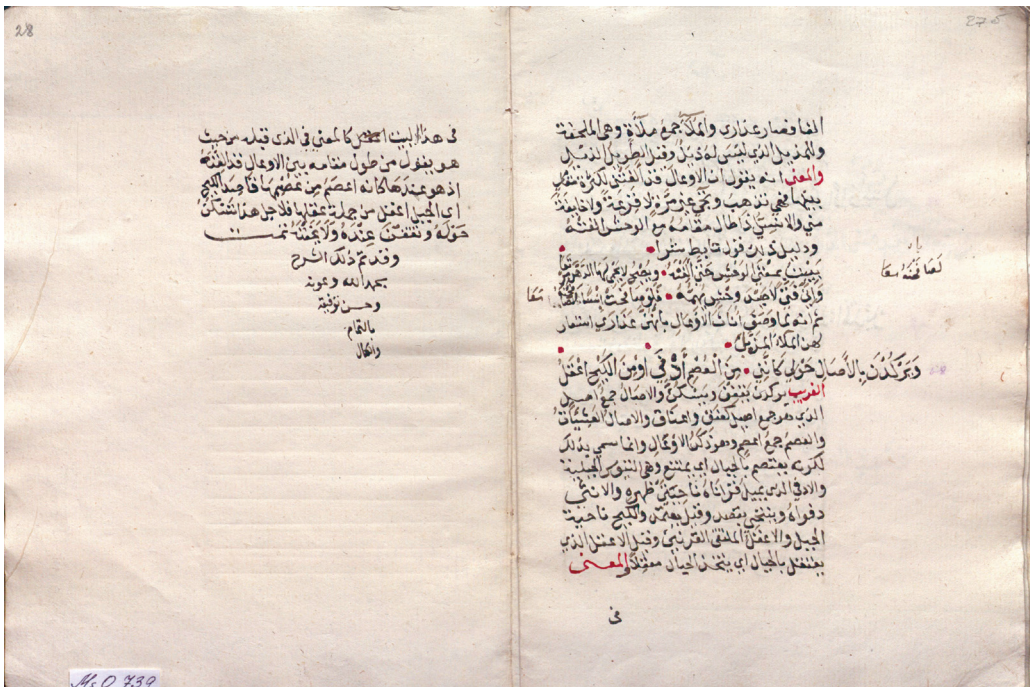


Fig. 21. Manuscript 739, last sheet

al-arab, we can evaluate exactly what features are the most intriguing and call the attention of scholars. In addition, copies of *Lamiyya* commentaries stored in manuscript collections deserve an independent careful study and description.

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Списки сочинения аш-Шанфары *Лямии* и списки комментариев к нему в фонде Института восточных рукописей и в собрании Восточного отдела библиотеки им. Горького

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Статья посвящена ставшему в последнее время актуальным вопросу изучения и описания восточных рукописей. В настоящем исследовании собраны факты из жизни известного доисламского поэта аш-Шанфары, рассматриваются особенности его самого

известного произведения — Лямийа. Основное внимание уделяется спискам этого сочинения, а также спискам комментариев на него, хранящимся в фонде Института восточных рукописей и в собрании Восточного отдела библиотеки им. Горького СПбГУ. Поэзия Аш-Шанфары традиционно противопоставляется произведениям авторов классических муаллак, воспевающих родовой патриотизм, из-за основной идеи — жизни в изгнании. Лямийа приобрела свое название благодаря особой повторяющейся рифме. Среди европейских исследователей получило распространение и другое название касыды — «Песня пустыни». Авторы проводят анализ особенностей различных списков сочинения аш-Шанфары, а также рассматривают наиболее важные моменты различных комментариев на его произведение. В статье приводятся иллюстрации некоторых листов списков сочинения аш-Шанфары и списков комментариев на Лямийю. Несмотря на то что сочинение аш-Шанфары уже неоднократно подвергалось исследованию отечественных, западных и арабских специалистов, анализ наиболее известных комментариев на Лямийат ал-араб позволяет оценить, какие именно особенности привлекали внимание ученых. Кроме того, хранящиеся в рукописных фондах списки сочинений-комментариев на известное произведение аш-Шанфары, сами по себе заслуживают тщательного изучения и описания.

Ключевые слова: кодикология, арабская рукопись, списки сочинения, арабский язык, доисламская поэзия.

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